

## New books on frogs and salamanders

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Sergius L. KUZMIN, 1995. – *The clawed salamanders of Asia. Genus Onychodactylus. Biology, distribution, and conservation.* Magdeburg, Westarp Wissenschaften, Die Neue Brehm Bücherei, Vol. 622, 1995: 1-112. ISBN 3-89432-425-2.

This short book gives a presentation of various traits of the two species of clawed salamanders. This genus has a large distribution in Asia including Russia, China, Korea and Japon. Therefore most of the studies available have been published in the languages of these four countries and are not easily available for many Western researchers. In this book all this information is now presented in English. The book introduces to the history of the studies of this interesting group of salamanders. The systematics and distribution of the family Hynobiidae are presented in order to explain the taxonomic position of the genus *Onychodactylus*. For both species, data on systematics, morphology, karyology, ontogeny, anatomy, ecology and behaviour are given. The content is thoroughly illustrated by numerous black and white figures and drawings, and two colour plates. This is a complete book about this small genus of salamanders. It will be of interest to all students of biology and evolution of amphibians.

Sally HAINES, 2000. – *Slithy toves. Illustrated classic herpetological books at the University of Kansas in pictures and conservation.* Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles & The Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas, *Contributions to Herpetology*, 16: i-vii + 1-184. ISBN 0-916984-53-2.

Sitting late in an autumn afternoon in a old fashioned library and turning the pages of those historical books that spoke for the first time of herps leaves unforgettable souvenirs of a fascinating world of images and stories. Sometimes one is stroke by the fantastic world that cohabits with detailed precise observation, like in the works of Österdam, a student of Linnaeus, where the sketch of a mermaid gives even more strength to the morphological study of the *Siren*. One is surprised to find all the details of giving birth of a viper in a book dated 1589 at a period where other authors just gave badly outlined figures of quite unidentifiable things. I always was fascinated by the chronological and descriptive details on ontogeny of European frogs that can be found in the book of Roesel of Rosenhof (1758) – a pre-Linnean work according to nomenclature – that is merely known for the high quality of the figures. This author not only was a precise observer of the traits of the species but had also detailed insight in their life history. Beside the strong and intense feeling that fieldwork and observation of animals in their habitat gives to the herpetologist, the discovery of the books and the authors that made up our knowledge is one of the major pleasures of our herpetological work.

Sally HAINES (2000) wrote a nice book that gives a glimpse of this fascinating world of books and she very nicely linked it to the Wonderland of Alice and other stories of Lewis Carroll. It is to invite us to see these mysteries with the open eyes of a child and to be able to make abstraction of theories and disputes that govern our daily work. Sally presents several books, choosing a single plate of each and putting it in its historical frame. In the introduction some explanation on the methodology of printing figures gives technical clues to understand the works. A list of herpetological works containing figures is added and presented both in alphabetic and chronological way.

This book gives an introduction to the fascinating world preserved in the libraries. It allows you to take home a souvenir of those autumn afternoons. It will surely make you return to discover more of these treasures and it will make us attentive to the thoughts and observations of those who preceded us.

